

Testimony in Support of HB-6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am from New Milford and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence.

My interest in these issues is because our daughter Rebecca was shot dead by a crack dealer who got the wrong address in Boston in 2008

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass an Extreme Risk Protection Order law, in 1999. It offers a means of last resort, with due process protections, to temporarily remove firearms from individuals judged to be at risk of imminent harm to themselves or others. It has been shown to prevent firearm suicide and stop mass shootings. It is time to strengthen the law so that it works harder to prevent gun violence. In particular, when the protection order expires, it should be a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence before the firearms are returned. That is not the case now.

Allowing family members to petition the court directly, as 12 other states do, provides an alternative means of initiating the process for people who are reluctant to involve law enforcement at the outset, because they fear law enforcement or are concerned about stigmatizing the gun owner as a criminal.

The idea of allowing the public to directly petition for a Extreme Risk Protection Order rather than through the police is also good one because some say that 70% of police work involves mental health, but to deal with mental health matters is likely not what motivates those who wish to join the police force,

However there appears to be a point of view that considers the Extreme Risk Protection order redundant and pointless since there are so many ways to commit suicide other than by a gun. Lets see how this works in practice

You have shown suicidal behavior and your family have petitioned for an order and you are pleading your case before a judge.

You say "your honor, indeed I am suicidal, but I cannot see how taking my gun will reduce the risk that I will actually commit the act"

At this point your lawyer has his head in his hands perhaps thinking that not only has he a client who doesn't like to listen to his lawyer, perhaps he is one of those who also doesn't like to pay him.

You soldier on. You have put your foot in it once, so hey why not put the other in as well?

You continue," because your honor I could just use a length of rope"

Your lawyer groans, at this point your case is scuppered for you have not only signalled that your gun is your first choice but also demonstrated you lack understanding. For the issue at hand and the underpinning of the law is not that you could, absent a gun, use a length of rope, for that is not disputed, but whether you would. As long as that question remains unanswered there is a fighting chance you wouldn't and therein lies the value of the law.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide

and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Payne

New Milford Ct